

The Use of Problem Based Learning – Facilitating linking of Theory to Practice in a Module Setting

Abstract

Objectives

To gain an understanding of how problem based scenarios can be used to facilitate linking theory to practice in relation to increase student employability.

Promoting student collaboration and reflection on learning applied to clinical practice scenarios

Aim – A teaching strategy using problem based learning and group work to facilitate student understanding of linking theory to practice within a module setting in order to prepare them for clinical practice and promote collaborative working.

Setting – Seminar rooms on campus, the University Simulation Suite.

Participants – A cohort of 34 first year student midwives undertaking a module focusing on the development of decision making strategies in midwifery practice.

Outline-

A visual presentation underpinned the main discussion with delegates being shown the module timetable and the mapped NMC practice competencies and domains to the theoretical content of the module, as well as some examples of the problem based scenarios, which were used.

The Introduction to the presentation included the rationale for the problem based group work and the importance in facilitating students to develop skills in linking theory to practice before attending clinical practice, so that they can appreciate the purpose of the module content to their care of women and the importance of being able to make sound and safe clinical decisions based on the individual needs of the woman.

The importance of the development of student led collaborative and problem solving learning was highlighted and the relevance of this to promoting employability and enhancing standards of care in clinical practice was discussed.

The main body of the presentation included an example of the scenarios used and a finished “workbook”, to enable delegates to visualise the theoretical work undertaken by the students and illustrate how they worked together to present their work to their peers and the learning that was achieved through this.

Emphasis was placed on the development of engaging midwifery students in understanding that the theory learnt during their time in university has a direct impact upon the standards of care delivered to the women, as it influences the ability of the midwife to make sound and safe clinical decisions based upon individual need and preference of the woman.

Findings –

Through the use of PBL, students were able to reflect upon the theory learnt and to apply it to different scenarios which facilitates their understanding that midwives need to be able to adapt different strategies to individual care planning in order to provide high quality, individualised care.

Conclusion -

This teaching strategy directly links student learning with the expectations of a regulatory body. Through the use of the PBL scenarios over the duration of the module, student midwives were able to learn how to use their theoretical understanding to plan and deliver individualised person centred care to women.

The students valued this form of learning and fed back that they felt well equipped to care for a variety of different women, using the same theoretical base but planning care according to individual need and preference.

Keywords

Problem Based Learning, collaboration, theory, practice.

Key messages

1. Health education students require to understand the link between theory and practice
2. Lecturers need to develop methods of learning and teaching which facilitate student application of theory to practice.
3. The linking of theory to practice improves standards of patient care
4. In being able to apply theory to practice, students increase leadership skills and improve employability.